

The well-known collector José C. Zeledon has kindly sent us a copy of his catalogue of the birds of Costa Rica, printed at San José in June 1882. The list embraces no less than 701 species, arranged according to Lilljeborg's system as modified by the Smithsonian Institution. Merely the names are given, with an asterisk to indicate such as are represented in the author's collection.

XXVI.—Letters, Announcements, &c.

We have received the following letters addressed to the Editors of 'The Ibis':—

Northrepps Hall, Norwich,
January 30, 1883.

SIRS,—Major Legge, in the article on *Gorsachius melanolophus* contained in his work on the Birds of Ceylon, says, "it is worthy of note that it has not been met with on the east coast, notwithstanding that it migrates from the east to Ceylon." I therefore transcribe the following from a communication just received from my friend Mr. Samuel Bligh, of Catton, near Lemastotle, Ceylon:—"A specimen (♂ juv.) of *Gorsachius melanolophus* was shot not far from here on November 25th, in a small bushy swamp by jungle, at an elevation of over 3500 feet. It was in good plump condition, slightly on the moult, and is the first capture of this species on the eastern side of the island."

Yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.,
February 8th, 1883.

SIRS,—Recognizing fully the courteous consideration bestowed upon my 'Check List' by your reviewer (who is not known to me as such), I beg to reply in the same spirit to some of the points raised.

Is not *Myiadectes* a purely suppositious emendation of *Myadestes*, Sw.? In my judgment, the derivation from *μύια*, Attic *μύα*, and *ἐδεστής*, is obvious, direct, and unimpeachable.

As to the orthography of the penultimate syllable, I can scarcely decide. It would simplify matters to take *μύα*, thereby eliding one of the vowels, with which suggestion I leave the composition in other hands, only urging that, in my opinion, the epsilon of *ἐδεστιάς* should certainly be preserved*. But, in any event, can the nominative plural of *Myiadectes* be *Myiadectæ*, as editorially written on p. 115 of the same number of 'The Ibis'?

My proposition of *Zamelodia* vice *Hedymeles* is based upon a rule which I follow in common with many zoologists, viz. that no synonym of any genus is available in any other connexion. *Hedymeles*, being the same word as *Hedymela*, is *functus officio*, because the latter is a synonym, even though an untenable one, of a different genus.

"Linnæus at 1758" is a watchword now adopted, I think, by American ornithologists without exception; and in writing *Icterus galbula*, *Limosa hæmastica*, &c., I simply conform to the rule. It is against the current of general usage, I know; but if some English ornithologist will try the experiment, he may be surprised to find how many nomenclatural Gordian knots this simple expedient cuts. And is there any reason in the nature of the case why Linnæus should *not* be taken at 1758? But this point, like that one involved in the "American idea" of binomials, will find, I fear, little, if any, favour from our Transatlantic co-workers, for the present at least.

The case of *Icterus parisorum* is a brilliant blunder of mine (*Med culpá*, *med maximá culpá*, I cry), and serves my ingenuity in wrong-doing right!

A curious point comes up in the matter of *Hydranassa* and *Dichromanassa*. The former was not lately instituted by Mr. Ridgway, as your reviewer states, but by Prof. Baird in

* [There is no objection whatever, that we can see, to the emendation of "*Myadestes*" into "*Myiedestes*." But if the *i* is omitted, as Dr. Coues suggests, and the term is written "*Myedestes*," this would primarily signify "mouse-eater" (from *μῦς*, *μῦς*), not "fly-eater." The correct Latin plural of *Myiedestes* would be "*Myiedestæ*" (*ἐδεστιάς*, gen. *ἐδεστοῦ*, pl. nom. *ἐδεσταί*=*edestæ*).—EDD.]

1858 (B. N. Am. p. 660). On my speaking about it to him today, he informs me that the coinage he intended was from ὕδωρ and ἀνασσα, the idea being that expressed by Audubon in calling the beautiful Louisiana Heron the "Lady of the Waters," or words to that effect. So far, so good; but now for *Dichromanassa*. I am myself responsible for that word; and the etymology is as given in the 'Check-List.' In conversation with me Mr. Ridgway was casting about for a suitable word to express the dichromatism of these Herons, and to also agree in termination with Baird's *Hydranassa*, which he proposed to adopt. On the spur of the moment I coined *Dichromanassa*, in the sense of "two-coloured Water-fowl," using the Doric *vâσσα* for the alliteration, in preference to Attic *νήττα*, or the usual *νήσσα* (cf. *Dendronessa*, *Pelionetta*). My wits were certainly wool-gathering when I failed to recognize *ἀνασσα* in the combination *Hydranassa*; but the curious facts are as I give them! If I may be permitted to revoke the *intended* and afterwards expressed etymology of *Dichromanassa* (contracted from *Dichromatonassa*) in favour of that derivation of the word which your reviewer very properly indicates, it will bring about the real agreement with *Hydranassa* which I had in mind and desired to express, as well as obviate any orthographic change in either of the two words in question.

Yours &c.,

ELLIOTT COUES.

Chusley Vicarage, Aylesbury,
February 22, 1883.

SIRS,—I have to ask you to correct in your next number an error in my paper on Chinese birds (Ibis, 1882, p. 433), by substituting *Monticola solitarius* (Müll.) for *M. saxatilis* (Linn.). It is such a very obvious error, and will appear such to every reader of your pages, that I feel it almost needs an apology from me for troubling you to make the correction.

Might I mention that the paper has, in the General Index, been put down under the name of my illustrious namesake,

who has so many advantages over me, as well as the possession of the letter *c* in his name, that he might not altogether be flattered by the mistake.

Yours &c.,

HENRY H. SLATER.

Wilton House, Farnham,
March 3, 1883.

SIRS,—It may be of interest, with regard to the nidification of *Balearica chrysopelargus* (Licht.) = *B. regulorum* auct., to record that my friend Lieut. Giffard, of the Welsh Regiment (41st), recently shot in Natal an old bird of this species off a nest containing two bluish-white eggs without spots.

Some authors have stated that the eggs are spotted; but the balance of testimony appears now to be in favour of the absence of spots.

While on the subject of the eggs of South-African Cranes, I would beg to call attention to the notes of Majors Butler and Feilden and myself on the nesting of *Grus paradisea* (Licht.), published in our paper on the Birds of Natal in the 'Zoologist' for September 1882, and to express a hope that the interesting theory therein advanced—that the eggs of this species are deposited, like those of a Bustard, in a depression scratched on the open "veldt" or grassland, and not in marshes—may be investigated by one or more of the ornithologists whose labours may extend to its breeding-haunts in Natal, the Transvaal, &c.

Yours &c.,

SAVILE G. REID, Capt. R.E.

Zihawei, près Shang-hai,
20 Janvier, 1883.

MESSIEURS,—Vous serez peut-être content d'apprendre que j'ai un nouveau *Pucrasia*. Je me propose de la publier sous le nom de *P. joretiana*. Il diffère des *Pucrasie* décrits en ce qu'il n'a pas de brun ni de roux dans le plumage, soit au cou

soit aux aîles, soit aux sous-caudales. Il est de la taille du *P. xanthospila*. Si vous le jugez à propos, vous pouvez insérer cette note dans la correspondance de 'l'Ibis.'

Votre tout dévoué,

P. M. HEUDE, S. J.

Cambridge, Mass.,
March 5, 1883.

SIRS,—I have read with much interest Mr. Seebohm's paper in 'The Ibis' (Oct. 1882, pp. 546-550) "on the Interbreeding of Birds," and while agreeing with him that "the interbreeding of birds supposed to be specifically distinct" is a subject entitled to careful consideration, I cannot see therein the complete explanation of "incipient species," or "subspecies," he seems to find in it (*l. c.* p. 548). For instance, I do not see how it can possibly explain the gradual intergradation between the widely diverse forms of a species often found occupying respectively the northern and southern borders of the breeding-range of the species of which they are unquestionably only extreme phases. To make my point clear, I will cite a single case out of the many well known to American ornithologists. Our common Partridge (*Ortyx virginianus*) has a latitudinal range extending from Massachusetts to the southern point of Florida, throughout which area it is an abundant and permanent resident. The South-Florida birds, compared with those from Massachusetts, are from one fourth to one third smaller, with bills not only relatively, but absolutely much larger, the whole plumage in general effect many shades darker especially on the ventral surface, where the transverse bars are greatly broadened at the expense of the alternating white interspaces. These differences combine to give to the two forms strikingly diverse aspects, the differences being as great and as easily defined as is often the case among perfectly distinct though allied congeneric species. If we knew only these two phases of the species in question we could view them in no other light than as perfectly "segregated" species. But between these forms there is every possible intergradation—a gradual passage of one

into the other through the representatives of the species occupying the area connecting the two above-mentioned localities, in other words, a gradually increasing variation, in passing southward, from the Massachusetts form toward the extreme Floridan phase.

If this were an isolated case, its significance in the present connection would be of less moment; but it is only one out of many among birds having the same breeding-range, not one of which but shows variations of a parallel character, and several of them in a nearly equal degree. It seems to me difficult to formulate the conditions whereby this tendency in so many species—in all the species, we may say, of the region under consideration—to vary in parallel lines and in the same geographical direction, can be brought about by interbreeding, especially as these variations are strikingly correlated with gradual changes in conditions of environment depending upon differences of latitude and climate. The difficulty of explaining all this on the theory of interbreeding becomes still more evident when we consider the adjoining regions to the westward, where, as soon as we strike markedly different conditions of environment, we meet with variations of a somewhat different character, which again affect to a greater or less degree all the species of the fauna, and are again correlated with a gradual modification of the environing conditions. When instances of intergradation between previously supposed distinct species began to attract attention, hybridity or interbreeding was the theory advanced for their explanation; but when it was found that variations of similar character obtained among most of the species (of course in varying degree in different species) inhabiting the same areas, and that certain phases of variation accompanied, or characterized, or were correlated with, certain changes in the conditions of life, the hypothesis of interbreeding was soon almost wholly abandoned, and that of geographical or climatic variation adopted as being not only rational but obvious.

While, from lack of requisite data, I cannot judge of the particular cases cited by Mr. Seebohm in illustration of his views, I cannot, on the other hand, subscribe to his belief

that interbreeding "is the great fact lying at the bottom of it all, and explaining it all,"—that is, the origin of "incipient" or "imperfectly segregated" species, or of intergradation between forms once supposed to be specifically distinct.

Yours &c.,

J. A. ALLEN.

Norwich, March 12, 1883.

SIRS,—As much confusion has hitherto existed between the British specimens of *Puffinus major* and *P. griseus*, it may be worth noting that a Shearwater which came alive into my possession in July 1851, and which was recorded in Morris's 'Naturalist' for 1851, p. 189, also in the 'Zoologist' for the same year, pp. 3234 and 3279, under the name of Greater Shearwater (*P. cinereus*), has, upon a recent examination, proved to be an example of *Puffinus griseus* (Gm.). The bird, which measured in the flesh 17 inches in total length, gape $2\frac{1}{4}$, wing from anterior joint 12, tarsus 2, middle toe $2\frac{1}{2}$, proved, on dissection, to be a male, probably immature.

I am not aware of *P. major* having been met with on the Norfolk coast; but it seems probable that in other localities *P. griseus*, as in the present case, may have been mistaken for the female or immature male of that species.

Yours &c.,

T. SOUTHWELL.

One of the Editors, being in foreign parts, has addressed the following letter to his sorely pressed coadjutor:—

St. Jean de Luz, Basses Pyrénées,
4th March, 1883.

DEAR COLLEAGUE,—You invite me to give an account of myself, and to make such amends as I can for deserting you, and this, too, at the very commencement of my career! I regret the unavoidable causes which have necessitated my absence, and also that circumstances have prevented me from

fixing my abode in a country where there was a chance of finding something new to relate in the ornithological way. However, at the command of the task-master, I must make my bricks without straw, or, at all events, make my scanty supply of straw go as far as possible.

Every visitor to Biarritz knows the pretty—and dull—little town St. Jean-de-Luz, ten miles to the southwards, situated on a crescent-shaped bay, into which the Nivelle pours its waters. To the south-east lie the ribs thrown out from the spinal column of the Pyrenees. The nearest of these is La Rhune, close upon 3000 feet in height, the mountain of the district; while to the south and west stretch the loftier ridges of Spain, the most conspicuous being the jagged Haya-éuri, or Trois Couronnes. The lower hills are clothed with closely pollarded woods, consisting principally of oak and beech, with some chestnut; and there is a considerable extent of moorland golden with gorse. To judge from the number of houses studded about, the country appears to be too thickly populated to be much adapted to birds of a retiring nature; nevertheless, for a civilized district, this Basque territory is not deficient in birds, and some species may be observed every day the mere sight of which would make an ornithologist's heart throb in Britain. The Red Kite, soaring over the town and steering its graceful course by alternate sideways depressions of the forked tail, is a very familiar object; the Black Kite does not arrive until April; but the loud mewing cry of the Common Buzzard not unfrequently reaches the ear, especially just now, when the breeding-season is commencing. I have never been up the Rhune without seeing the Bearded Vulture; in fact, the last time there were three (two young birds of the previous year and one adult) circling over the valley on the south-eastern side, in the crags of which there is probably a nest by this time, as there is certainly in Trois Couronnes. The more I see of the Bearded Vulture, so called, the more I feel inclined to doubt that he is really closely related to the Vultures; and I rather prefer to consider him a degenerate poor relation of the Falcons proper. This may be heresy for all I know: I have no books

to see what Mr. Gurney thinks. A few Griffon Vultures also nest, I believe, on that side of the Rhune, *just* within the French frontier.

The Egyptian Vulture has not yet arrived; last year I saw the first pair on 8th March. The Spotted Eagle I have seen several times on the wooded sides of the Spanish mountains; and very noisy birds they are; and that ignoble although handsome-looking bird the Short-toed Eagle drew my attention from a family party of Crested Tits not long since.

Magpies swarm; nineteen were counted in one field; and they are now hard at work upon their nests. People here complain of the scarcity of Partridges, and no wonder; but it is useless to tell them that the Magpies and Jays are some of the greatest egg-robbers in the world. The Raven may always be seen among the mountains; and not long ago I saw a couple soaring round a man who was digging a grave for a dead horse just outside the town, a proceeding which they resented by repeated angry barks, expressive of their disgust at such a misapplication of the gifts of nature. Respecting the smaller birds there is nothing much to be said without making a catalogue. Yarrell's Wagtail, with the blackest of backs, is the common species; and there is every gradation up to the palest grey of the White Wagtail.

Passing from the land to the sea, the Herring-Gull of the coast is at present the yellow-legged *Larus cachinnans*; and an adult specimen which I shot on 12th January not only had those parts of the brightest lemon, but also showed scarcely a trace of those grey striations on the head and neck which are often considered to be a constantly recurring winter plumage and quite irrespective of age. Then, strange as it may appear, the large Shearwater which occurs, or at least which has been obtained, on these coasts is not *Puffinus major*, Faber, of the North Atlantic, but the Mediterranean *P. kuhli* (Boie). The severest shock that I received was, however, in the Bayonne Museum, where the Curator showed me, with pride, a fine specimen of the Great Skua, shot at the end of last year, and freshly mounted. A very *dark* bird, with *large coarse feet*. I raised the wing; the under-

coverts were *black*, not mottled brown, as they should be in *S. catarrhactes*! Could it be that the Antarctic Skua brought home alive by our worthy brother of the B. O. U., Capt. W. V. Legge, and which escaped from the Zoological Gardens, has been mixing matters in the northern hemisphere? and just as I flattered myself the Skuas were so nicely disposed of too! The thought was horrible.

On the other hand I have discovered another example of *Syrhaptes paradoxus*, killed along the line of the Pyrenees, in addition to the two which I have already recorded as obtained near Bayonne in the western and Perpignan in the eastern portion of the chain. On a recent visit to Oloron an inspection of the collection formed by Philippe of Bagnères-de-Bigorre showed that the bird which that naturalist had recorded in his 'Ornithologie Pyrénéenne' (p. 100) under the name of "Ganga unibande, *Pterocles arenarius*," is really a male of Pallas's Sand-Grouse. In the above work (his rough journal, printed after his death, and very difficult to obtain) he describes the specimen accurately, and says, "J'ai tué cet oiseau sur la frontière espagnole, le 27 mai, 1863. Je ne l'ai plus revu." M. Adrien Lacroix, author of the 'Oiseaux des Pyrénées,' seems to have been unaware of the existence of these three specimens.

Lastly, I have been discovered and most cordially welcomed by the celebrated French ornithologist M. Olph-Galliard, formerly of Lyons, but now resident in the little frontier town of Hendaye. His museum, library, and store of experience have been freely placed at my disposal; but it is to be hoped that he will himself give us the benefit of his practical knowledge of the avifauna of these parts in the pages of this Journal, to which he has already been an esteemed, although too unfrequent, contributor.

Yours &c.,

HOWARD SAUNDERS.

New Ornithological Publications in Progress.—Mr. E. W. Oates's 'Handbook of the Birds of British Burmah' will be

issued in two volumes, the first of which is nearly ready, if not already out. It will contain descriptions of all the species of birds known to occur within the limits of British Burmah and the state of Karennee, about 800 in number.

Mr. C. B. Cory, of Boston, informs us that he has a collector at work in San Domingo, and will probably have a volume on the birds of that island ready in the course of next year.

M. Taczanowski is working hard on his 'Avifauna of Peru,' in which will be given an account of all the birds hitherto recorded as having occurred within the limits of that Republic, including those obtained by Haukswell, Bates, Bartlett, and other travellers on the Peruvian Amazons. The total number of species embraced in this extensive district will not be less than 1300, and probably more nearly 1400. M. Taczanowski was in London most of last February, engaged in examining the Peruvian birds in the collections of Mr. Selater and Messrs. Salvin and Godman and in the British Museum, and on leaving London proceeded to Paris for the purpose of consulting the specimens in the Jardin des Plantes. His work will probably be printed in France.

We are glad to be able to announce that the final sheets of 'The Ibis' 'List of British Birds' have been corrected, and that the list will be ready for distribution very shortly.

The Birds of Timor Laut.—At the Meeting of the Zoological Society held on the 20th February last, Mr. Selater gave an account of the birds collected by Mr. H. O. Forbes, F.Z.S., during his recent expedition to Timor Laut, and exhibited the specimens. The species were fifty-five in number, fifteen of which were described as new to science under the following names:—*Ninox forbesi*, *Strix sororcula*, *Tanygnathus subaffinis*, *Monarcha castus*, *Monarcha mundus*, *Rhipidura hamadryas*, *Myiagra fulviventris*, *Micræca hemixantha*, *Graucalus unimodus*, *Lalage mæsta*, *Pachycephala arctitorquis*, *Dicaeum fulgidum*, *Myzomela annabellæ*, *Calornis crassa*, and *Megapedius tenimberensis*. The general facies of the avifauna, as thus indicated, was stated to be

decidedly Papuan, with a slight Timorese element, evidenced by the occurrence of certain species of the genera *Geocichla* and *Erythrura*; while the new Owl (*Strix sororcula*) was apparently a diminutive form of a peculiar Australian species. Mr. Forbes, at the date of his last letter, was intending to return to Timor Laut to continue his investigations.

Baleniceps in East Africa (?.)—Dr. Hartlaub has been told by the well-known African traveller Dr. Pechuel Loesche, who has just returned from the Congo, that he had there made the acquaintance of Mr. H. H. Johnston (the painter and naturalist, well known to many of us). Mr. Johnston told him that on the Cunene, between Benguela and Angola, *Baleniceps rex* was "quite a common bird." Dr. Pechuel Loesch added, that near Ambrez a bird was described to him that could not be any thing else but *Baleniceps*, and that he did not doubt that Mr. Johnston was correct.

[We cannot say that we quite believe this to be correct. If *Baleniceps* really occurs on the Cunene, it is most singular that it should have escaped the knowledge of the energetic explorer Anchieta and the other Portuguese collectors.—EDD.]

The Blue Magpies of Spain and Siberia.—In the Zoological Society's Gardens, Regent's Park, there are now five examples of the Blue Magpie of Spain (*Cyanopica cooki*) and two of the Blue Magpie of Siberia (*C. cyanea*) together in one cage, thus affording an excellent opportunity of comparing together these two so nearly allied species, which inhabit such widely separated areas.

Ross's Gull.—The U.S. National Museum has received three (not very perfect) specimens of Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rossi*) from Point Barrow, Alaska, and are advised of the capture of three other specimens in perfect plumage.

Lord Lilford writes from Seville (March 3rd) that the Bustards (*Otis tarda*) which he was expecting to find in the

Marisma had not yet come down from the upper cornlands, and that, although there had been good rains about Christmas, the country was still very dry, and there were very few Waterfowl. Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) seemed to have been there some time; and *Hirundo urbica* winters at Seville in small numbers. On the 28th February an arrival of Storks (*Ciconia alba*) had taken place, and a few Hoopoes had also put in an appearance.

Mr. E. F. Im Thurm has resigned his post at the Museum at Georgetown, British Guiana, and accepted an appointment as Colonial Magistrate on the Pomeroon river, in the same colony, where he will have a better opportunity of studying "nature" and the native races, in which he takes such a lively interest. Mr. Im Thurm has applied to his friends at home for an assistant collector; and we believe measures have been taken to send one out to him in the course of the summer.

Mr. W. A. Forbes's Niger Expedition.—Owing, it is believed, to the stranding of one of the river-steamers, no letters have been received from Mr. Forbes since those dated from Shonga on the 25th Oct., 1882. Shonga lies a short distance up a small creek on the right bank of the Niger, about fifty miles below Rebba. At the time he wrote, Mr. Forbes had been at Shonga three weeks, and expected to remain three weeks longer, after which he was intending to accompany Mr. Mackintosh and the British Consul in an attempt to get up to Sokoto by water. Mr. Forbes had, unfortunately, suffered from fever at Shonga, and had been able to do very little collecting there. His list of birds obtained only amounted to about 105 species; and the difficulty of procuring spirit had interfered with his collection of fishes. It has, we are glad to say, been ascertained that Mr. Forbes was still at Shonga and in good health and spirits at the commencement of January last.